

# Georgia<sup>®</sup> Department of Community Affairs

March 2015

## In Memory and Tribute to Former DCA Board Chair Billy Croker



The Georgia DCA family has recently lost one of its own. James "Billy" Croker, 79, of Cedartown, Ga., passed away on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2015. Billy was the current Secretary and a three-time Past Chair of the DCA Board of Directors. He was first appointed to the DCA Board in 2000 by Governor Roy Barnes. He was an At-Large Member, and he served as Chairman for a total of three years: in 2004, in 2010 under Governor Sonny Perdue with DCA Commissioner Mike Beatty, and in 2014 under Governor Nathan Deal with DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin. During his service with DCA, he served with three governors and five commissioners.

Billy was committed to serving Georgia's citizens on many boards and had helped improve the development of industry,

## NEWS AND EVENTS

# DCA in DC

*GA DCA talks safe and affordable housing in the nation's capital*



*(l-r) DCA Chief Operating Officer Brian Dill, Commissioner Camila Knowles, Deputy Commissioner of Housing Carmen Chubb, and Affordable Housing Program Specialist Philip Gilman*

business and county services, especially those in Polk County. After his service in the United States Air Force, Billy returned to Polk County where he started the hardware business which he kept for over 40 years. He was the chairman of Billy Croker Realty, Chairman of the Polk County Commission, a board member of the North Georgia Regional Commission, and the Past President of the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia.

Some of Billy's most notable achievements include the construction of the Boys and Girls Club in Cedartown, the opening of the Silver Comet Trail, the opening of the Women's Shelter, creation of Police Drug Units in Polk County, construction and expansion of a new Health Department building, construction of new Fire Stations, development of Comprehensive Land Use Plans for Polk County, and the establishment of Keep Polk Beautiful. In 2006, Billy was featured in Georgia Trend Magazine as one of Georgia's top 100 most influential people. In 2008, he was recognized as the recipient of the Emory Greene Leadership Award, the highest honor bestowed on a Georgia county commissioner.

Billy is survived by his wife Pat, five children, six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He will be missed by all and remembered here at DCA for his tireless contributions to seeing community and economic development, as well as safe and affordable housing, available for all Georgians.

## Atlanta plays host to National Main Streets Conference March 30-April 2



Members of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Executive Team and Housing staff braved the ice and snow in Washington, D.C. during the first week of March to meet with several legislators to discuss housing issues for Georgia's citizens. Federal resources assist DCA in helping Georgians have better housing options. Meetings with Georgia's representatives at the federal level served to underscore DCA's commitment to safer and more affordable housing. Pictured in the photos below, the team visited with **1)** U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson, **2)** Congressman Rick Allen, **3)** Congressman Sanford Bishop, and **4)** Congressman Buddy Carter, in addition to a meeting at the U.S. Department of the Treasury to promote the HomeSafe Georgia program to help homeowners avoid foreclosure.



## OneGeorgia Authority Awards \$1.3 million in grant funds

*Brantley, Laurens and Murray counties to benefit*

Gov. Nathan Deal and members of the OneGeorgia Authority Board met March 9 to approve and affirm \$1.3 million in grants from OneGeorgia Authority's portfolio of financing programs. These awards will assist economic development projects in rural Georgia aimed at creating jobs, stimulating private investment, supporting and retaining existing jobs, and enhancing regional competitiveness.

An Economic Development Growth and Expansion (EDGE) grant award of \$300,000 was affirmed and contracts approved for the City of Dublin and Laurens County Development Authority to assist with construction in the location of a warehousing and manufacturing facility for Valmiera Glass USA Corp. Valmiera will create 150 jobs and invest \$20 million within 60 months.

The Georgia DCA Office of Downtown Development & Main Streets team members have been busy getting ready to spotlight the state for the 2015 National Main Streets Conference to be held in Atlanta March 30 - April 2. The conference will help more than 1,200 participants from all over the country look at ways to support rural, suburban and urban districts through creative economies, technology and small business development.

With Georgia as a living laboratory, Main Street staffers will meet with other community leaders to discuss opportunities to build a stronger **TEAM** -- through **Teamwork** + **Entrepreneurship** **Across** Main Street -- both locally and nationally to ensure the sustainability and excitement around downtown redevelopment.

Conference goers can also take mobile tours of Georgia landmarks and areas of successful redevelopment in Dahlonega, Atlanta's historic districts and parks, Griffin, Suwanee, Hapeville, Madison and Monroe.

For more information about the conference, visit [www.nationalmainstreetsconference.com](http://www.nationalmainstreetsconference.com).

Want to know more about DCA's Main Street program? Contact Director Billy Peppers at [billy.peppers@dca.ga.gov](mailto:billy.peppers@dca.ga.gov).

## PlanFirst Application Deadline Approaching

PlanFirst is DCA's program to recognize and reward communities of any size throughout Georgia that have clearly demonstrated an established pattern of successfully developing and implementing their Local Comprehensive Plan. For consideration, all applications must be submitted by **May 15, 2015**. Click [here](#) to access the application on the DCA website.

The OneGeorgia Authority Board also approved two Equity Fund grants during the March 9 meeting. These funds assist communities and regions in building the necessary infrastructure to support economic development.

Murray County received a \$500,000 OneGeorgia Equity grant to assist with site preparation for the Murray County Inland Port Development, which is a proposed multi-modal, rural inland port. This intermodal rail terminal for international and domestic cargo will be planned, designed and constructed by the Georgia Ports Authority and serviced by CSX Railway on 42 acres provided by Murray County.

The City of Nahunta was awarded \$500,000 in OneGeorgia Equity grant funds to construct an elevated water tank within the Brantley County Industrial Park. The awards also assist the City in developing an existing well to augment supply to the new tank and to extend a water line from the existing system in order to loop long, dead-end lines. The project is expected to retain 60 jobs in the industrial park and generate \$200,000 in private investment from E-Pellets Group/Nahunta Pellets.

## State of Georgia awarded \$10.1 million in rental assistance for people with disabilities

*Federal HUD program to help 350 Georgia households*



The State of Georgia recently became one of 24 states, plus the District of Columbia, and the only state in the southeastern U.S. to be awarded millions of dollars to help prevent thousands of low-income citizens with disabilities from being unnecessarily institutionalized or possibly falling into homelessness.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced March 2 the awards topping \$150 million in rental assistance to 25 state housing agencies across the country. The



## GET to KNOW DCA

*March Topic of the  
Month*

### State Enterprise Zones:

*Opportunities for Revitalization within  
GA's Underdeveloped Census Tracts*

In limited census areas, or Zones, opportunities exist to combine local tax and investment incentives with direct assistance and tax credits from the state and federal governments.

In addition to discretionary, "transaction-based" incentive models that must be reinvented for a specific project or business, a "geographic-based" program can be created by local ordinance to provide incentives for all businesses within the Zone.

To qualify to be designated as a State Enterprise Zone, an area must meet at least four of five criteria:

- pervasive poverty established using the most current United States decennial census prepared by the U. S. Bureau of Census: a) each block group must have at least 20% poverty and b) 50% of block groups must have at least 30% poverty
- unemployment rate (average for preceding year) at least 10% higher than state or significant job dislocation

Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), through its Georgia Housing and Finance Authority, will be able to assist 350 households in the state with permanent affordable rental housing and needed supportive services with the \$10,174,407 award it received.

Nationwide, nearly 4,600 households occupied by extremely low-income persons with disabilities will be helped by the HUD awards. Many of these individuals hope to transition out of institutional settings and back into their communities.

Operated in partnership with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Community Health, Georgia's program will assist individuals transitioning out of nursing homes under the Money Follows the Person Initiative and those with behavioral health issues moving from chronic homelessness or out of the state's mental health hospitals or correctional system.

"When added to the resources awarded in 2013, these funds will provide valuable affordable housing resources to approximately 480 households over the next five years," said Carmen Chubb, deputy commissioner for housing at DCA.

According to a HUD press release, its support of state housing agencies is made possible through the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) program which enables persons with disabilities who have extremely low incomes to live in integrated, affordable housing.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FINANCING

### February Financial Awards

#### Region 4

#### Carrollton Payroll Development Authority

- \$300,000 in Regional Economic Business Assistance (REBA) funds
- Will spur \$26 million in private investment within 24 months
- Will create 120 new jobs
- REBA funds will assist in the expansion of Decostar Industries, Inc., an auto supply manufacturing facility, in Carroll County

## UPCOMING EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

### HomeSafe Georgia events in March & April

# HomeSafe Georgia®

Free  
Mortgage  
Payment  
Assistance

- underdevelopment evidenced by lack of building permits, licenses, and land disturbance permits -- at least 20% lower than development activity within local body's jurisdiction
- general distress and adverse conditions (high crime rate)
- general blight

There are available incentives such as property tax exemption and abatement or reduction in occupation taxes, regulatory fees, building inspection fees, and other fees that would otherwise be imposed on qualifying businesses.

A qualifying business or service enterprise must create five or more new full-time jobs; provide "economic stimulus" in that designated zone; and, when possible, 10% of new employees shall be low-and moderate-income individuals. If residential and/or rehab of an existing structure where the value of improvements is greater than 500% of land value, exemptions apply to any entity.

The Enterprise Zone Employment Act (OCGA §36-88-1 et seq.) statute has been in existence since 1997. Local governments interested in the Act should consult closely with their city or county attorney and obtain proper legal counsel and advice before enacting a program.

For more details on State Enterprise Zones, contact Brian Williamson, DCA Deputy Commissioner/Community & Economic Development, at [brian.williamson@dca.ga.gov](mailto:brian.williamson@dca.ga.gov).

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**HomeSafe Georgia is a free, state government program to help homeowners who are unemployed, underemployed or face other types of financial hardships save their homes from foreclosure. There is no cost to apply and no fee if approved.**

Veterans' Career Fair & Diversity Job Expo, March 19, 2015; 10 AM - 2 PM; Cobb Galleria Centre, Atlanta;

50+ Job Fair, March 19, 2015; 10 AM - 2 PM; Lou Walker Senior Center, 2538 Panola Road, Lithonia;

Wheeler County Job Fair & Career Expo; March 25; 11 AM - 1 PM; Wheeler County Service Center; 16 W. Forest Avenue, Alamo;

Veterans Career Fair, March 26, 2015; 9 AM - Noon; Mitchell Allen Memorial Hall, 160 North Alexander Street, Toccoa;

2015 Northeast Georgia Career Expo/Job Fair, March 31, 2015; 10 AM - 2 PM; Lanier Technical College- Forsyth Conference Center, 3410 Ronald Reagan Boulevard, Cumming.

Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce 2015 Job Fair, April 2, 2015; 10 AM - 2 PM; Gainesville Civic Center, 830 Green Street, Gainesville;

Northwest Georgia Career Expo, April, 2, 2015; 11 AM - 3 PM; the Colonnade, 264 Catoosa Circle, Ringgold;

Family Financial Wellness Fair, April 18, 2015; 10 AM - 2 PM; Mercer's University Center, Macon;

Veterans' Career Fair & Diversity Job Expo, April 22, 2015; 10 AM - 2 PM; Northwest Georgia Trade & Convention Center, Dalton;

Thirteenth Congressional District's 12th Annual Jobs Fair, April 24, 2015; 10 AM - 3 PM; Georgia International Convention Center, 2000 Convention Center Concourse, College Park.



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